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Old Witch Jail and Dungeon

Built 1684—Witchcraft period 1692-93

Discontinued as a Jail 1813

4 Federal Street, Salem, Mass.

Open every day 9 A. M. to 6 P. M.

Evenings by Appointment

Residence Phone 2948-R

EXHIBITS

DUNGEON

BILL FOR KEEP OF THE WITCHES

CURIOS FOUND IN THE JAIL

COPIES OF LETTERS FROM THOSE CONFINED
IN THE DUNGEON

ARTICLES WORN BY PRISONERS

HAWTHORNE FAMILY TEA POT

CHARLES DARWIN LETTER

COPY OF WM. SHAKESPEARE WILL
with deciphered spelling

PORTION OF ROSE STANDISH SHAWL

BRIDGET BISHOP'S EXECUTION WARRANT (Copy)

GILES COREY'S SIGNATURE (Copy)

PICTURE OF SALEM HOUSE WHERE FIRST INCANDESCENT
LIGHTS WERE USED. INVENTED IN 1859
BY PROF. MOSES G. FARMER

LIBRARY AND ANTIQUES

This circular compiled by Alfred Putnam Goodell, and may be secured
from him at ¹⁰/₈ cents each, plus three cents postage.

WITCHCRAFT IN BRIEF

Bulls of Popes Innocent VIII (1484), Alexander V (1494), Leo X (1521) and Adrian VI (1522) concerning the practice and punishment of those practicing conjuring with Demons.

Parliament under James 1st (1603), passed an act ratifying a belief in Witchcraft throughout the three kingdoms and under this authority our Salem trials were held.

"After the statute against Witchcraft had been repealed, in England, we must not forget that an act of the Assembly of the Calvinistic Church confesses a great, national sin the act of the British Parliament abolishing the burning and hanging of Witches."

John Wesley, born 1704, was a firm believer in Witchcraft and Charles was not, so expostulated with his brother for persisting in entertaining this "horrid belief."

† Blackstone (1723), accepts Witchcraft:—"It is a crime of which we knowest not well what account to give, etc."

In Salem there were thirteen women and six men hanged as witches; none were burned, but Giles Corey was pressed to death at a spot in or near the jail yard and according to Perley on the dungeon floor, because he refused to plead to the indictment when examined.

Abroad, there were nine million persons put to death by burning, hanging, rack and pinion, etc., under the guise of being in league with the devil.

In Andover a dog was accused of throwing people into fits by looking upon them and was found guilty of bewitching them and put to death. A Salem dog received the same punishment.

In 1646, Alyse Young was executed for being a Witch; she was hanged in what is now Hartford, Conn. Rhode Island followed in 1647, and in Boston a Mrs. Jones was tried, convicted and executed for being a Witch, 1648, as well as Mrs. Ann Hibbins, 8 years later.

Rebecca Nurse of Salem Village, now Danvers, one of the nineteen, was first found not guilty of practicing the black arts, but this verdict not pleasing Judge Stoughton or the spectators in the court room, the jury reconsidered their finding and returned with a verdict of "guilty." Reverend Noyes excommunicated the old lady from the church, which procedure was generally followed in the case of the Witches and at the same time the Crown took away their property. These acts were later rescinded.

The Witchcraft Delusion extended from January 1692 into May 1693 at which time Governor Phips released one hundred people held for Witchcraft.

PERSONS HANGED FOR WITCHCRAFT

June 10, 1692—Bridget Bishop.

July 19, 1692—Sarah Good, Sarah Wildes, Elizabeth How, Rebecca Nurse, Susanna Martin.

August 19, 1692—George Burroughs, John Proctor, George Jacobs, John Willard, Martha Carrier.

September 22, 1692—Martha Corey, Mary Esty, Alice Parker, Ann Pudeator, Margaret Scott, Wilmot Reed, Samuel Wardwell and Mary Parker.

September 19, 1692—Giles Corey was pressed to death refusing to admit guilt or innocence.

Fifty persons confessed and were freed.

OLD WITCH JAIL AND DUNGEON

On March 8th, 1683, the Town of Salem voted that they are willing a house of correction be built and joined onto the prison and appropriated thirty pounds for the purpose, requesting the Selectmen to "manage the land."

The surrounding towns united in paying their proportionate parts of the cost of building the prison. In those days the pound went a great deal further in purchasing power than \$5.00 goes today. Various additions were made from then on and in 1763-4 the county voted to build a new prison, using as much of the old as possible. The original roof with its hand-hewn rafters, crossties, roof boards, shingles and nails may still be seen under the present roof built in 1764, this roof we have to guide us in tracing out the old sections. The jail appears to have been raised up on the old sills making the second story the present third story and the 1764 roof built to cover the old as well as the newer part to the north and west where the land was wider. So, in our trip, we start from the attic with its 21 - 22 inch wide, pit-sawed, floor boards and work our way down examining the huge oak beams and uprights, split laths, and a peek up into the interior of the great chimney with its twisting flues and sootless interior.

County Street, now Federal street, was not in existence in those early times, so the front door of the jail opened on Prison Lane, now St. Peter Street, and the back door entrance was through the old kitchen, the present parlor. The jailer, William Dounton, sold grog and small beer from the jail kitchen.

When the Witchcraft Delusion broke out in Salem Village, then the "Second Parish," now Danvers, in the early spring of 1692, a new and serious phase of crime entered the hitherto tranquil life of the community and according to Exodus 22:18, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," the death penalty must be carried out on all found guilty of bewitching others. None of those executed were burned, guillotined or torn on the rack and pinion. They were hung from the branches of trees on Gallows Hill and the writer's father remembered seeing the old stumps, reminders of the swinging corpses. The bodies were cut down and thrown into a ditch or ravine, close by, and in the gray of the morning the relatives came to claim them, carry them to the farm yards where they were buried.

In the jails of this period, the jailer's quarters, inmates' quarters, house of correction and work rooms constituted one wooden building. The villagers and prisoners met evenings in the long kitchen and played games.

The only cell was a stone-walled dungeon where were kept those waiting to be executed, pirates, bad Indians and the Witches, and was used up to 1813.

The jail interior consisted of oak-framed chambers in which those serving sentences slept and worked. The women spun and wove, and the men "cobbled" and "tinkered" to pay their "dyet" or board. If any were too feeble to work then the jailer provided the food and sent the bill to the County.

Those unable to pay their debts were sent here to work them out.

Thus it is that the bill we exhibit, for the keep of the witches and others, represented cost of board or "dyet" supplied by the jailer and as the bill was never paid in full, came back to the jail in William Dounton's hands to be presented again for final payment, got lost and was found with other old papers in 1934, by Mrs. Alfred P. Goodell.

† This priceless document is seen, under glass, in a special case in the center of the beautiful balcony-encircled library lined with glass panelled cases, walnut throughout and flooring of rich figured design; together with the Alfred Porter made pewter teapot used by Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne in the house at No. 14 Mall Street, Salem, where her illustrious husband wrote the "Scarlet Letter." Also, shown with it is a letter from Charles Darwin.

The Witchcraft Delusion ceased as soon as Gov. Phip's wife and the ministers, judges and their wives began to be suspected and accused; it was all right to please the hysterical populace by hanging the yokels, but the bulwarks of the settlement were not anxious to become victims of their own superstition and so in May, 1693, Governor Phips, by proclamation, swung open the front door of the jail and released all those persons held for trial, being tried or convicted of Witchcraft.

This old jail held many interesting characters, John Alden, son of the original John Alden of Plymouth fame, also the father of prohibition, a young minister who wrote and illustrated a poem exposing the hypocritical old Deacon Giles, whom he pictured as a demon firing the still of his rum distillery, other devils taking part in the making of the rum.

Guns were set in the jail entry, facing front and back doors to warn the "Marbleheaders" against carrying out their threat to come over to Salem jail and liberate their countrymen who "sot" on our town fathers for building a pest house on Lowell Island.

Honorable Abner Cheney Goodell, Jr., the historical scholar, and father of the writer, the present custodian of the property, lived here until his death in 1914. He led a very active life, first Vice-President of the Essex Institute, Trustee and Secretary of the Peabody Academy of Science, President of the New England Historic and Genealogical Society, Editor of the "Province Laws," State House, Boston, and many other positions of honor. Mr. Goodell drew up resolutions commending Dr. Alexander Graham Bell for the success of his first public exhibition of the telephone given in Lyceum Hall, now Eagles' Hall, on February 12th, 1877, when members of the audience talked with Dr. Watson in Boston over a Western Union telegraph wire connected through the Salem telegraph office to the crude telephone instrument on the Lyceum Hall stage.

The jail was abandoned in 1813, and in 1818 was bought by Amos and Edward Smith of the County of Essex for \$800 and in 1857 Mr. Abner C. Goodell, Sr., rented a portion of the building and sometime after Mr. Abner C. Goodell, Jr., bought the property and the writer, Alfred Putnam Goodell, was born here on February 18th, 1877, so that there was but one owner between our family and the jail.

The information, herein, may be freely copied, provided recognition is given for the source from whence secured.

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From the Dungeon in Salem Prison

August 20, 1692

“Honoured Father:

After my humble duty remembered to you, hoping in the Lord of your good health, as, blessed be God! I enjoy, thou in abundance of affliction, being close confined here in a loathsome dungeon: the Lord look down in mercy upon me, not knowing, how soon I shall be put to death, my grandfather having suffered already, and all his estates seized for the king. The reason of my confinement is this; I having, through the magistrates' threatenings, and my own vile and wretched heart confessed several things contrary to my conscience and knowledge, tho to the wounding of my soul; (the Lord pardon me for it) but oh! the terrors of a wounded conscience who can bear? But, blessed be the Lord! he would not let me go on in my sins, but in mercy, I hope, to my soul would not suffer me to keep it in any longer: but I was forced to confess the truth of all before the magistrates, who would not believe me; but it is their pleasure to put me in here, and God knows how soon I shall be put to death. Dear father, let me beg your prayers to the Lord on my behalf, and send us a joyful and happy meeting in heaven. My mother, poor woman, is very crazy, and remembers her kind love to you, and to uncle; D. A. (Daniel Andrew) So, leaving you to the protection of the Lord, I rest, your dutiful daughter.

Margaret Jacobs.”

REBECCA NURSE HOUSE

1635 to present

Still standing in Salem Village, now Danvers Massachusetts where in the year 1692, year of the Witchcraft delusion, Rebekah (old spelling) Nurse lived.

At her first trial, examination, Judge Hathorne (ancestor of Nathaniel Hawthorne) held her over the Witchcraft Court where she was found "NOT GUILTY" but Justice Stoughton ordered the jury back to reconsider the finding and they returned with a verdict of "GUILTY."

Thus it was that the frail old woman, over seventy, was hanged and her property confiscated by the King; the church excommunicated her but after she was hanged her property was returned to her children and she prayed back into the church.

Mrs. Nurse's chair still may be seen in the room from which she was arrested and brought to this jail where, after being adjudged guilty, condemned to die, she was chained and cast into the dungeon because the Witches were looked upon as too unclean for human hands to touch, then dragged to the oxcart which conveyed them to Gallows Hill there to be hanged from the branches of trees long since disappeared.

The tree pointed out as "one of the Witch trees" on another hill is in no way connected with the Witchcraft.

NONE WERE BURNED AT THE STAKE

The courthouse where all the Witches were tried was torn down in 1787. It stood opposite the Salem City Hall on Washington Street.

Information, herein, compiled by Alfred Putnam Goodell guide and owner of the Old Witch Jail and Dungeon, Salem, Mass.

The Martyrdom of Rebecca Nurse

Men lost their sense of reason
On that bleak New England Coast;
The devil from his hideout in
The forest or the lea or maybe
T'was a cavern in the rocks
Along the sea came forth to curse
The Godly the uprighteous and
The free and unsuspecting children
His agents were to be.

They saw an apparition over the
Housetops fly, Goody Nurse the
Saintly on a broomstick riding by
Back of the clearing to the swamp
She flew to gather with the rest
At the stewing of the brew.

A thunder peel, the lightning's flash
The rattle of dead men's bones;
The fireflies their tiny lamps
Lit with an eerie glow
The meeting of the Witches down at
The devil's rendezvous.

And as the victims took the oath
To crucify the innocent of the earth
A ghastly, fiendish laughter rose
It was the triumph call from hell.
A cursed thing that devil's yell
Another worker added to his
Godless clan twice signed and sealed
A compact filled with evil deeds
Forswearing Almighty God in mockery
Of our martyred Lord.

Dry-eyed Rebecca sat the open bible
Resting in her lap ready to meet
Her fate, a victim of man's
Superstitious hate as silently she
Prayed gazing into the portal of the sky
And seeing there the angels standing by
Knew God was nigh for this dear, old
Grandma was about to die.

Lo, there comes the rumble of the
Witches' cart striking terror
Into those stalwart hearts;
Roughly they seized her and more
Roughly still chained her feeble hands
Against her will; what mattered that
For soon the hangman's rope tightened
About her withered throat causing her
To suffer as the law decreed for she
Must hang by the neck on Gallows Hill
Until she died.

Thus the innocent were put to death
In their agony they held steadfast
To the last their conscience clear
Let their martyrdom be a lesson to
Us of little faith to stand firm
For those whose circumstantial
Evidence defy who seek to KNOW
To find a reason WHY whom their
Accusers would condemn to die.

—Alfred Putnam Goodell

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and interesting in the history of science.

2. The second part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the various theories of the origin of life. It is shown that the most plausible theory is that of the spontaneous generation of life from non-living matter.

3. The third part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the evidence in favor of the spontaneous generation of life. It is shown that the evidence is very strong and conclusive.

4. The fourth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the various objections to the spontaneous generation of life. It is shown that the objections are all unavailing.

5. The fifth part of the paper is devoted to a summary of the results of the investigation. It is shown that the spontaneous generation of life is a fact and not a theory.

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